



TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY®

Center for Analytics &amp; Data Science

## CADS 2026: New Year, New Pathways

Welcome to the January 2026 edition of the CADS Newsletter. As we move into the new year, we're excited to share updates regarding the Center for Analytics and Data Science.

To start, we've made updates to our monthly newsletter design to create greater opportunities to share higher-quality and higher-quantity information with researchers and faculty. The 2026 newsletter series have been revised to keep readers informed about current TXST and CADS research advancements, resources, and outreach involving AI and Data Science throughout the university ecosystem.

In the months ahead, we'll be sharing more stories from our industry partners and highlighting work from the Center's affiliated research teams. These collaborations continue to drive our mission forward, and we're eager to spotlight the impact happening across the CADS network.

We also look forward to a spring semester full of outreach events and new opportunities to engage with graduate students, colleagues, and partners. Thank you for helping us drive the CADS mission and make an impact.



### **Dr. Tahir Ekin**

Fields Chair in Business Analytics

Director, Center for Analytics and Data Science

Professor, Department of Information Systems and Analytics

## Major Update

### Introducing the TXST AI Research Pathways: AI-Ready Initiative

responsibly use, apply, and innovate with AI across disciplines; from foundational literacy to advanced, funded research.

AI and data-driven methods are becoming fundamental to research across all disciplines. Texas State University (TXST) will support faculty, staff and student researchers to responsibly apply, evaluate, and innovate with AI. CADS, in collaboration with other university units, will co-lead a coordinated, scalable approach to AI research literacy; from introductory awareness to advanced methodological development. This initiative will include multiple panels, workshops, and efforts throughout the Spring semester and 2026 year.

**[Learn more and get a glimpse into planned programming.](#)**

## Important Dates



**[Learn More](#)**

### **Quarterly ADSA Members Call - Jan 14, 2026 10 AM**

The Alliance for Data Science and AI (ADSA) is a professional association for data science and AI in higher ed that supports academic institutions to launch, grow, and evolve their data science and AI initiatives through strategic guidance, community expertise, and resources grounded in real institutional practice. All faculty and staff from member organizations like TXST are welcome to attend.



### **2026 AI in Teaching and Learning Symposium**

**Proposal submissions are open through January 16th.**

Faculty members are encouraged to submit and showcase their work. Faculty are encouraged to submit and involve student researchers (if any) in representing their respective areas.

### **Educating for Responsible AI: Human Rights as a Foundation, with Claudia Roda (AUP) - January 21, 2026**

Dr. Claudia Roda, a leading scholar at the intersection of human rights and digital technology, will share insights on the



multistakeholder challenges during this ADSA Speaker Series.



### **TXST Artificial Intelligence Town Hall - January 29, 2026**

Texas State community members whose work addresses any aspect of artificial intelligence in any field using any methods are invited to join this conversation.



### **TXST Open Datathon - February 6-13, 2025**

Each year during Love Data Week, University Libraries hosts the TXST Open Datathon, a competition that raises awareness of open data while helping participants build practical data management and problem-solving skills.



### **CADS Catalyst Data and AI Research Showcase**

February 27th, 2026 – Details Coming Soon!

Featuring 2025 CADS Catalyst Award Recipients.

## **Research Spotlights: Interdisciplinary Innovation at TXST**

### **Leveraging AI for Geospatial Analysis**

CADS faculty fellow **Dr. Yuan** and her research partners have recently been published in the flagship journal of the Geography field, Annals of the American Association of Geographers. The

Wang, P., Yuan, Y., Li, L., & Lu, Y. (2025). GALAX: A Framework for Geospatial Analysis Leveraging AutoML and eXplainable AI. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2025.2591684>

The study introduces GALAX, a next-generation framework that enhances geographically weighted regression (GWR) by integrating automated machine learning (AutoML) with explainable artificial intelligence (XAI). GALAX automatically selects optimal machine learning models for different geographic regions and applies SHapley Additive Explanations (SHAP) to provide localized insights into feature contributions. The framework is built to address spatial nonstationarity, model nonlinear relationships, support high-dimensional datasets, and operate across both regression and classification tasks.

In addition, a flexible Python package, PyGALAX, is currently in development and expected for release in early 2026, making the framework more accessible to both researchers and the broader public.

**[The source code for GALAX is openly available on GitHub](#)**

## Texas State's Role in the SPARC Research Initiative

Texas State University is actively contributing to a seven-state research initiative known as SPARC, a multi-year study examining the distribution, composition, and attrition of special education teachers across participating states.

Launched in 2024, CADS faculty fellow **[Dr. Li Feng](#)** has lead Texas based research in collaboration with the members of her Education Policy Lab at TXST.

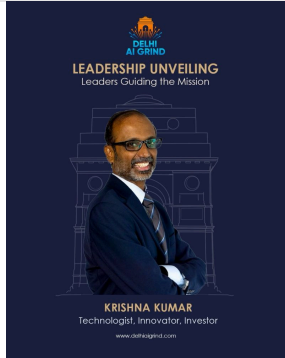
Below are links to the Year 1 results paper, the project dashboard, and a feature published last year in McCoy Magazine with additional details about the SPARC project and Dr. Li Feng's involvement.

**[SPARC Year 1 Results](#)**

**[SPARC Project Dashboard](#)**

**[McCoy Magazine Feature on SPARC and Dr. Li Feng](#)**

## Industry Updates



CADS Industry Partner and Distinguished Technologist **Krishna Kumar** was **recently recognized** by Delhi AI Grind as a guiding force leader. **Delhi AI Grind** is India's first city-wide experiment in collective intelligence and applied AI. Launched as a major initiative culminating in the Delhi AI Impact Summit 2026, they serve half a million young minds from schools, colleges and ITIs to transform Delhi into a living laboratory of innovation.

Krishna is also a co-founder of Austin AI Valley, an AI innovation ecosystem, and serves on the Dean's Leadership Council at Texas State University and the Board of Advisors at the Center for Analytics and Data Science, bridging industry, academia, and talent development. He currently leads digital development and innovation initiatives focused on AI, automation, and transformation with real-world impact. Additionally, he has been recognized as a Distinguished Technologist and appointed Honorary Advisor to the Council of Economic Development and Competitiveness of the State of Mexico, reflecting his leadership in AI, cloud, and emerging technologies.

## AI Education Resources

### The Importance of AI Literacy

*Written by CADS AI Engineer Dr. Divya Gangwani*

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has rapidly shifted from experimental technology to a practical capability embedded across many sectors. Tasks that once required extensive manual effort, specialized expertise, or long processing times can now be automated or significantly accelerated. As AI becomes part of everyday systems, AI literacy is no longer optional—it is essential for informed participation in a data-driven world.

Today, AI is actively used in healthcare, finance, education, transportation, and public administration. In healthcare, AI systems can automatically analyze medical images and patient data to identify potential risks that previously required hours of manual review by clinicians. In finance and compliance, AI can continuously monitor large volumes of transactions to flag anomalies or potential fraud, reducing reliance on periodic, labor-intensive audits. Collectively, these advances have changed not only how the world operates, but also how we envision the future.

only in technology hubs, but across sectors. What these roles increasingly require is AI literacy: the ability to understand, evaluate, and use AI tools within one's field.

AI literacy is like driving a car. You do not need to build an engine to be a capable driver, but you do need to understand the rules of the road and navigate changing conditions. A generation ago, professionals who quickly adopted digital tools became indispensable. Today, the same transformation is occurring with AI. Those who can skillfully integrate AI into their work, whether as social workers, teachers, or business owners, will stand out in their professions.

AI literacy is critical as it enables people to understand the capabilities and limitations of AI systems. While AI can process data at scale and identify patterns rapidly, it lacks human judgment, accountability, and contextual understanding. Without AI literacy, there is a risk of over-reliance on automated outputs or misuse in high-stakes decisions. With it, stakeholders can ask informed questions, interpret results responsibly, and ensure appropriate oversight.

Ultimately, AI has reshaped expectations of what is possible. AI literacy empowers professionals, leaders, and institutions to adapt thoughtfully, leveraging automation where it adds value, preserving human judgment where it matters most, and building long-term trust in AI-enabled systems as they continue to evolve.

## CADS AI Curriculum Modules

The AI Curriculum Modules at Texas State University are an initiative by the Center for Analytics and Data Science (CADS), developed with funding from our NSF Expand AI grant. These modules are designed to enhance AI education across disciplines, offering introductory, foundational, and domain-specific content. Made available through TXST Canvas, they support students and faculty in building relevant AI skills, promoting interdisciplinary learning and advancing workforce development. By exploring potential integration of these modules into courses, CADS aims to broaden access to AI knowledge and foster an inclusive environment for AI literacy across the university community.

### Canvas Modules

## Austin AI Alliance: AI for Entrepreneurs Series

The Austin AI Alliance is an AI consortium dedicated to advancing the capabilities, usage & impact, social responsibility, and inclusiveness of AI technologies and applications by leveraging the unique resources, talent base, and culture of creative innovation in Austin.

On January 21st, they kick off a free monthly event series focused on entrepreneurship and

startups. These sessions rotate topics and take place every third Wednesday. This month, they'll go deep on how AI empowers creative problem solvers to bring solutions to market. AI for Entrepreneurs – **[free tickets available](#)**.

On the 27th, you can also join 200+ AI leaders, innovators, and stakeholders for the second annual **[State of AI in Austin](#)** — an afternoon of groundbreaking research insights, inspiring awards celebrating local AI champions, an expert panel, and hands-on demos showcasing what's next in Austin's AI ecosystem.

## Funding Opportunities & Resources

*CADS is happy to support your research submission, let us know if we can be of assistance at [cads@txstate.edu](mailto:cads@txstate.edu)*

### *Opportunities*

#### **NVIDIA Academic Grant Program**

Provides hardware, software, and cloud resources to support academic research and teaching in AI, HPC, and data science. **[Learn More](#)**.

#### **NSF CISE Future Computing (Future CoRe)**

Solicits research proposals in core computer and information science areas with potential funding up to four years. **[Learn more](#)**.

#### **NSF PCL Test Bed**

Supports creation of programmable cloud laboratories that enable networked, automated, and reproducible research. **[Learn more](#)**.

### *Resources*

#### **Finding Funding with Pivot-RP**

The TXST University Library and Research Development departments recently held a workshop on finding funding using the Pivot-RP funding database tool. **[Learn more](#)**.

#### **NAIRR Pilot Resources**

Provides researchers and educators with access to national AI resources including compute, datasets, models, and training tools.

Learn more: **[NAIRR Resource](#)**

## NAIRR Pilot Classroom Expansion Conferences

Through a series of roundtable discussions and in-person workshops, these conferences bring together faculty from a range of institution types to explore how the NAIRR Pilot resources can be effectively integrated into undergraduate and master's level education.

Learn more: [Expansion Conferences](#)

### NSF Office of Advanced Cyberinfrastructure

Offers advanced computing, data, and networking resources to accelerate research and workforce development.

Learn more: [NSF OAC Resource](#)

### Army HBCU–MI Proposal Writing Guide

Video resource designed to support proposal development for Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Minority Institutions. [Learn more.](#)

### Hanover Grants Calendar for AI & Machine Learning

This calendar reviews upcoming grant opportunities focused on AI & Machine Learning, covering a range of grant makers. Short-term targets with set deadlines are included alongside longer-term opportunities expected to occur across the next year and beyond. The calendar is available below. [Learn more.](#)

*Help us share more opportunities with researchers.*

We're happy to help share opportunities within the industry and beyond with our audience. Please complete [this form](#) or reach out to [cads@txstate.edu](mailto:cads@txstate.edu), and we'll promote them across our university networks.



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